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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000132

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [CH](#) [SU](#) [QA](#)
SUBJECT: CHAD: DOHA EMBASSY OFFICER MEETING WITH CHADIAN
UFDD REBEL SPOKESMAN

REF: A. DOHA 00112
[1](#)B. SECSTATE 12030

Classified By: CDA Michael Ratney for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S/NF) SUMMARY: PolOff met at the Embassy February 11 with Jebren Issa, the Chadian rebel group "Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (UFDD)'s" self-described international spokesman. Issa, a naturalized British citizen, asked for USG assistance in his group's cause against the current regime of Chadian President Idriss Deby Itno and claimed the USG was the first and only foreign government he had been directed to approach. The UFDD, he said, was seeking USG assistance in influencing a cessation of French and Libyan interference in Chadian internal affairs. He claimed direct participation by French military special forces in combat operations against the United Military Command (the triumvirate organization made-up of the UFDD and the two other rebel groups) and warned of rebel attacks against the French military in the event its forces continued to collaborate with Chadian government forces. Poloff told Issa not to contact the Embassy again, but that we would contact him for any follow-up. END SUMMARY

CURRENT SITUATION

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Issa stated the current situation in Chad was dire and in need of quick USG intervention, since the U.S. is the champion of democracy worldwide. He claimed the UFDD currently pulled-back from an attack on the Presidential Palace in N'Djamena and would not strike it because President Deby held hundreds of kidnapped businessmen, senior political party representatives and influential people at the Palace as "human shields." He cited UFDD reports indicating President Deby was injured in fighting with rebels and was transported by French military forces back to the Presidential Palace.

FRENCH INVOLVEMENT

[1](#)3. (S/NF) UFDD leadership claimed French Special Forces are helping President Deby's military and were directly involved in armed conflict in early February in the town of Masaqat, variant Massaguet, 60km north of N'Djamena, and mid-February outside the Presidential Palace. According to witnesses cited by the UFDD, French forces were intertwined with Government of Chad (GOC) forces in the subsequent government retreat from Masaqat. Issa had no additional information on exact dates or circumstances of the French involvement when pressed for additional details. He did state that the UFDD was not unwilling to target French forces if forced into a corner. He claimed it was in France's best interest to keep

President Deby in power, since most of the country's industry was controlled by French nationals or interests.

ROOTS OF CONFLICT

14. (S/NF) He stated the current conflict was started after President Deby reneged on promises made during three agreements signed in 2007 in Sirte, Libya, and supported by Sudan, Libya, Chad and Gabon. The agreements were made following renewed fighting after Deby changed the constitution in 2006, effectively granting himself dictatorial powers and giving him the means to crush political dissent. After the third and final agreement was signed circa November 2007, the GOC and UFDD agreed to a power sharing deal with the appointment of a rebel Prime Minister and the decision to integrate rebel forces into the Chadian military beginning one month after the agreement was signed. Leader of the UFDD, Mahamat Nouri, ordered his subordinates to begin planning to overthrow Deby if a month went by without GOC implementation of the agreement. According to Issa, Nouri, a former Defense Minister, was tired of the broken promises made by the Chadian President and felt negotiations had failed. In addition, circa September 2007, Mohammed Noor Abdul Karim, who was not a part of UFDD, was lured back to Chad under the guise of being named Defense Minister by Deby; weeks later he was forced-out and sought refuge at the Libyan Embassy in N'Djamena. As of late January 2008, Issa stated Karim remained at the Libyan Embassy and forbidden from leaving by the GOC.

UFDD - NO SUDANESE CONTROL/INFLUENCE

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15. (S/NF) Issa stated Mahamat Nouri was the overall political leader of UFDD, with General Taher Wojje in charge of UFDD military forces. He repeatedly denied Sudanese government involvement in the UFDD's struggle, stating that the UFDD's cause was being financed and led by donations from Chadians from the northern, central and eastern parts of the country. He also made repeated points that this was not a tribal conflict, and that President Derby's sister supported the UFDD.

USG ASSISTANCE/UFDD GOALS

16. (S/NF) After 30 minutes of talking about the need for USG assistance, when asked what the U.S. should do, Issa paused - almost taken aback - and rhetorically repeated the question posed to him. Regaining his momentum, he stated the UFDD wanted the USG to influence France and Libya immediately to stop interference in Chad's internal affairs, and support the UFDD's main goal of establishing a free and democratic Chadian government. When asked about long-term USG assistance and UFDD goals, he stated the UFDD wanted the USG to assist in the development of democratic government and civic organizations. He claimed the UFDD wanted to make English the official language vice French, which he called a backward, colonialist language compared to the internationally spoken and economically viable English.

WHY QATAR, WHY NOW?

17. (S/NF) During the first part of the conversation, Issa stated he was in town on business and had recently appeared on Al-Jazeera Arabic and English television as the opposition spokesman in debates on the current situation in Chad. Embassy Doha PAO confirm he appeared on Al-Jazeera broadcasts and was listed on multiple legitimate websites as the UFDD spokesman, including the UFDD French/Arabic website www.ufdd.org. He stated that because of French involvement, the UFDD wanted to approach the USG to counter the threat.

JEBREN ISSA

¶18. (S/NF) Issa is a naturalized British citizen and currently resides in Oxford, England. He was in Qatar working for an American security contractor installing nuclear material monitoring equipment for the Qatari Government. Prior to moving to England in 2006, he lived and worked in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia around the same time as the UFDD General Tahir, who was serving as Chadian Ambassador in Riyadh. While he did not have any business cards listing his current role as UFDD spokesman, he provided a business card from Saudi Arabia for his previous employer, Solutions Soft Net, listing him as the Public Relations Manager. He is in his mid-thirties and from the Toubou, aka Quran or Daza tribe.

COMMENT

¶19. (S/NF) Issa appears to be who he claims, and his statements that he was directed to approach the USG by Mahamat Nouri and UFDD leadership appear plausible. Embassy assesses that press reporting indicating the UFDD and United Military Command were being driven back to camps in eastern Chad along the Sudanese border was the impetus for the UFDD to reach out to the USG. Per refs, USG policy to support the Chadian government vice the UFDD was officially conveyed to the Qatari Government, and given USG posture towards the rebels, no future Embassy contact with Issa is anticipated.

¶10. (U) Minimize considered.

RATNEY